

Washington in 1834

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Reprinted from *The American Historical Review*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, Jan , 1922

Washington in 1834; Letter of Robert C. Caldwell

The following letter, presenting an entertaining picture of Washington in 1834 and some interesting glimpses of President Jackson, was written by Robert C. Caldwell to his father, Colonel Samuel Caldwell, of Franklin, Ohio. For the opportunity to print it we are indebted to Professor George M. Whicher, of Hunter College, New York City, whose great-grandmother was in 1834 the wife of Colonel Caldwell. This lady, born Margaret Patterson, was thrice married. Her first husband was Samuel Venable, of Lexington, Kentucky. This letter passed at her death to her daughter by this first marriage, Mrs. Stephen Whicher (Mary Venable), from whom it descended to Professor Whicher.

The letter is written on a double sheet of paper, 14 by 17 inches in size; the four pages are entirely filled save the small space which was left to be the front and back of the folded letter when ready for mail. There is no sign of direction or postmark, or indication of the postage, from which it may be inferred that the letter was transmitted by some friend.

Colonel Samuel Caldwell, a proprietor in Franklin before 1810, and holder of various offices in its early days, was a state senator of Ohio in 1824, 1825, 1828, and 1829, and at the time when the letter was written was an associate judge of the court of common pleas for Warren County.¹ Robert C. Caldwell was appointed second lieutenant in the Marine Corps October 17, 1834, first lieutenant March 3, 1845, and died November 13, 1852.

¹ *History of Warren County, Ohio* (Chicago, 1882), pp. 423, 424, 427, 519–521, 550.

Washington City 29th Dec. 1834

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Dear Father,

Probably you think long by this time to receive a letter from me and as I have an abundance of leisure whenever I choose to curtail my curiosity and confine myself to my room, I have concluded to write you and try if I can fill, in such measure as to be interesting to you, this mammoth sheet. Well I have seen a great many new things and great men, since I came here, but before I proceed to tell you about them you must first hear how I arrived here and when.—I wrote you last as I was about to leave Cin.² on Wednesday the 3rd inst. Arrived safely

2 Cincinnati.

272 on Saturday at 10 o'clock P. M. at Wheeling. Took stage next morning at 10 o'clock and arrived (via Washington, Brownsville, Union,³ Cumberland and Hagerstown) at Fredericktown⁴ on Tuesday evening at 4 o'clock. Next morning took the rail-road to Baltimore, 60 miles, and arrived at Balt. early in the evening having traveled at the rate of 15 miles per hour, part of the way by horse-power and part by steam. Almost all the towns from Wheeling to Baltimore are flourishing inland towns, and Frederic especially. Balt. is a curious city—the Monumental City. Among its curiosities are the Washington Monument—the battle monument, the public fountains—the shot towers—the Cathedral—and the shipping.—The Washington Monument is built of white marble and is 180 feet in high. I ascended it and had a bird's eye view of all the city—and the prospect over the surrounding country and far, far down the bay is very delightful. The shipping, consisting of Frigates, Brigs, Schooners, Sloops and what not, some sailing up and some sailing down the bay, moving with the fleetness of birds and as if by some magic influence, contrasts very happily with the vessels at the wharf, which with their masts and yards all stripped of their sails, look like a deadened forest on the beach. These, you know, were the first vessels I had ever seen with a mast and sails.

3 Uniontown, Pa.

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4 Frederick, Md.

Well, the Cathedral I cannot pretend to describe particularly; it is the Roman Cath. church and is the largest in America—is filled with splendid and curious paintings and as a curiosity is a considerable source of revenue to the church, as they charge 25 cents for every person who visits it.—The shot towers are merely great tall cones built of brick, immensely high. The public fountains are merely natural springs, very large and strong, which have, for the convenience of the city, been walled up with hewn stone, and very handsomely adorned. There are some three or four of them.

On the 12th, passed from Balt. here, by stage in 5 hours, distance 40 miles—arrived here at 2 o'clock on Friday the 12 inst.—put up at Brown's Hotel⁵ —boarding \$1.25 per day—dear enough, but 25 cents per day cheaper than Gadsby's.⁶ On the 17th found a genteel and comfortable boarding-house at \$1.00 per day a few doors from Brown's on the opposite side of Pa. Avenue and removed to it, where I now am writing this letter.—But to return a little. On my arrival, found Taylor Webster and Gen. Taylor of Newport⁷ boarding at the same house, made my arrival known to them soon and they treat me with great friendship and politeness. I get into my own room and all things arranged; I overhaul my letters of Introduction. Find among the most

5 The Indian Queen Hotel, kept by Jesse Brown, on the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue, between Sixth and Seventh streets.

6 The National Hotel, Pennsylvania Avenue and Sixth Street.

7 Gen. James Taylor (1759–1848), of Newport, Ky., quartermaster general of Hull's forces in 1812, and in 1834 probably the largest landed proprietor in the Ohio Valley. Lewis Collins, *History of Kentucky* (second ed., Covington, 1882), pp. 114–115. He was a first cousin of Col. Richard Taylor, Zachary Taylor's father. A. R. Watson, *Some Notable*

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Families of America (New York, 1898), p. 19. See also *American Historical Register*, I. 57–58.

273 prominent of them Micajah T's⁸ to Martin Van B. So off I goes at a proper hour in the day to call upon the Gent.—find him in—he receives me with a hearty welcome and presents me by letter to the Prest.—where, calling, I meet Maj. Donaldson⁹ who reads Mr. Witchers¹⁰ letter and leads me in and introduces me, in propria persona, to Gen. Jackson. I see no change in the Gen since I saw him in Cincin.¹¹ —he received me very cordially indeed—in company with him I found Amos Kendal and Bell of Tennessee, Speaker of the House,¹² and two or three others, to all of whom I was cordially introduced and then invited to sit and spend the evening in familiar chit-chat which of course I did.—dispersed at a seasonable hour with an invitation to take a family dinner with the Prest. and Maj. D. and family on a specified day, which invitation I of course accepted.

⁸ Meaning, no doubt, Micajah T. Williams, of Cincinnati, surveyor general for Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan.

⁹ Maj. Andrew Jackson Donelson, the president's wife's nephew. See *American Historical Review*, XXIII. 355–356.

¹⁰ Stephen Whicher had married the writer's half-sister, Mary Venable.

¹¹ Jackson was at Cincinnati, “over one boat”, in the preceding summer.

¹² Amos Kendall, fourth auditor of the treasury; John Bell.

Well the day came round, and 3 o'clock, the dining hour, found me introduced into the anti-chamber along with Col. — (somebody, I've forgotten his name) and Col. — somebody else, whose name I cannot call either, and presently the Maj. D. and the Prest. entered and there we sat some 15 minutes or so chatting, when the Porter informed the Maj. dinner was ready—lead by the porter we passed out of the Anti-chamber, through a spacious Hall and entered another very finely furnished room which was darkened by

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the window-curtains and blinds, and contained two tables richly laden with fine plate and dishes and tall splendid lamps burning on either table—around one table were the chairs which showed that that was the one at which we were to sit—so we were seated—what attracted my attention first was the very nicely folded Knapkin on each plate, with a slice of good light bread in the middle of it.—Well, all being seated, the Gen. asked a blessing, then the servants about the table, I believe one to every man, commenced—“Will you have some roast beef?—some corn beef?—some boiled beef?—some beef stake?”¹³

¹³ The reader who is struck by the amplitude of the provision may like to compare the grave conversation of Washington's best waiter with Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith over a small dinner to be given, that same winter, to Miss Martineau. “Yesterday at Mrs. Woodbury's there was only 18 in company and there were 30 dishes of meat'. . . But I carried my point in only having 8 dishes of meat, tho' I could not convince Henry it was more genteel than a grander dinner”. *First Forty Years of Washington Society*, pp. 360–362.

Well, the beef being through with, away goes your plate and a clean one comes. “Will you have this kind or that kind or the other kind of fish?” Fish being through, a new plate and then some other dish. Then a new plate and some other dish—then a new plate and the pies—then the desert—then and in the mean time the wines—sherry, madaira, and champagne which are filled into the glasses by the Butler, and then with a significant nod of the head drink one another's health 274 —then after so long a time, all of which made very agreeable by miscellaneous conversation we rise from table and retire again to the chamber whence we had come, where being seated and in conversation in high glee, in comes a servant with a dish of coffee for each of us. Well, must drink it of course—so directly aside looking at my watch find it almost 7 o'clock, I conclude it must be time for me to retire. So I takes the Prest. by the hand and says “Gen., I bid you good-night and it will always be my pride to do you honour.” Well says the Gen. “You can do it in no way better than by learning your duty and dischargeing it faithfully. Improve your opportunities and you will no doubt make a first-rate officer.” These words the Gen. spoke with an air

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of characteristic frankness and in the presence of those gentlemen before named, so that I could not but look upon them as very flattering testimonials. With a hearty shake of the hand I bid the Gen. Adieu—then taking leave of the other gentlemen I retired quite gratified at the hospitality and friendship I had recd.

But I find myself rather ahead of my story. Meanwhile between the time that I recd the invitation and eat the dinner, I saw Gen Lipton, H. and E. Hayward, Reynolds, Cass, and Dickerson,¹⁴ of my own Corps Maj. Weed, Col. Henderson, Col. Brown, Adj. Howle, Capt Twigs [?], Lieut. Tyler and Doct. Kearney—besides several other officers of different grades whose names (except Gen Jesup and Col. Craughan)¹⁵ I cannot pretend to recollect and I expect hardly their faces. Well now for some of the strange things I have seen.

¹⁴ Probably the reference is to Lewis Cass, secretary of war, and Mahlon Dickerson, secretary of the navy. The members of the writer's own corps here mentioned are, apparently. Maj. Elijah J. Weed, quartermaster of the corps. Col. Archibald Henderson, colonel commandant U. S. M. C. 1834–1859, Capt. Parke G. Howle, Capt. Levi Twiggs, First Lieut. Henry B. Tyler, and Surgeon John A. Kearney, U. S. N.

¹⁵ Maj.-Gen. Thomas S. Jesup, quartermaster general U. S. A. 1818–1860; Col. George Croghan, inspector general 1825–1849.

The Capitol. I wish I possessed the faculty of noticing things minutely and then the ability to describe them lucidly and accurately, I would then portray to you this building. It is said that there is not another Edifice in the known world that combines in such sweet proportions, as does this, the excellencies of grandeur, magnificence, superbness, splendour, beauty and simplicity. It is built of solid white marble sandstone blocks, and I think scarcely a wooden floor or step about it—all stone and floors brick. You have frequently seen engravings of it, and probably you may now see somewhere on the walls of the public house you are at the picture hanging; if so it will give you a better idea of the

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external appearance of the building than I can give you with my pen. The principal front is East—and most splendid it is (but here I begin to meet the difficulty; I cannot describe with any justice; however to make up for the lameness of what I may say and to give you a more perfect idea of the building, I will try to procure and have franked to you, a description by the Architect himself, which you will find mystified by technics, but the most of which you will be able to understand.)¹⁶ I was saying the front east,—and the West;—what

¹⁶ *Guide to the Capitol of the United States* (Washington, 1834), “by Robert Mills, Engineer and Architect”, who however was not architect of the Capitol. That office was abolished in 1829, Charles Bulfinch then retiring; Mills was appointed architect in 1836. The pamphlet is not excessively technical. though it is excessively occupied with the opinions of Mills. The young lieutenant's statements as to the interior arrangements of the Capitol are not always accurate.

275 is it? Why a front also grand, elegant. The ends North and South are also elegant fronts—the building is four stories including the basement story—this lowest is cut off into rooms and halls chiefly formed by the arches that sustain the superstructure—two of these spacious rooms are devoted to Refectories or Eating houses for the members—towards the close of the session the houses sit from 10 A. M. till 2 A. M. of the following day sometime, and then it is that they make use particularly of these houses—they call for Mutton Soup, or turtle soup, or Oyster Soup, or beef stake or Coffee or tea or rum, just as they choose, and get whatever they call for.—Congress furnishes the keepers with house and fire-wood free of charge and then regulates, by rule, the price of everything, so that they cannot be imposed upon, and one member of the House told me that none but Members were admitted there and another told me anybody who pleases may go and eat if he pays the established fare; so, how that matter stands, exactly, I cannot say, for I have never gone to eat. The second story is divided into rooms and halls—one for the U. S. Court—one for the Library of Congress—then some jury and committee rooms—the third story into rooms for the several standing Committees of both Houses—and the fourth story

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consists of the Chambers of the two Houses of Congress (i.e.) excepting the central part of the building which consists of but one story from the base of the 2nd story—that is, it is carried up in a circle. through all the stories to the very top of the great dome—this is what is called the rotunda which is lit from the top of the Dome, which contains some grand pieces of sculpture and some excellent paintings illustrative of scenes which occurred during the Infancy of the Republic, and principally during the Revolutionary War.¹⁷ These sculptures and paintings are set in niches in the wall, made on purpose to receive them.—A Bronze statue of Jefferson stands out in the floor¹⁸ and two elegant statues lately executed by Persico, a famed Italian Artist, which are set each on a temporary pedestal of wood—one is the representation of the God of War—Mars as the Romans called him—and the other the Goddess of Peace—carved from white (and I suppose Italian) marble—they have been the work of years—the artist is here now; a very swarthy and excessively jovial Italian—he takes great pride in brushing them up and keeping them in complete order. I have not yet learned what Congress is to give him for the work, but have no doubt but the sum will be immense.¹⁹

17 Referring to Trumbull's four paintings. The other four are of later execution.

18 Afterward placed in the grounds of the White House, but now once more in the rotunda of the Capitol.

19 In 1837 these figures were set up in niches in the east portico; see pl. 117 in Glenn Brown's *History of the United States Capitol* (Washington, 1900), vol. I. Successive appropriation acts, beginning in 1829, show the total payment to have been \$24,000. The signing of the contract was Adams's last action as president; *Memoirs*, VIII. 104, 123. Luigi Persico was a Neapolitan artist who had lived in Lancaster, Philadelphia, and elsewhere in America since 1819. W. U. Hensel, *An Italian Artist in Old Lancaster* (Lancaster, 1912): *Works of James Buchanan*, III. 56–59.

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The Library of Congress is one of the interior curiosities which I have not yet had time to examine, but shall take some early opportunity of doing so.—The two chambers, in their internal arrangement, very much resemble the Senate Chamber at Columbus—so much for the inside of the Capitol, now for round about awhile. A lot of probably two acres lies spread out before the East front; very beautifully indeed laid off into walks and flower-beds—it is true at this season of the year the trees and shrubbery and bushes are not loaded with flowers and blossoms and fruit, yet the very mention of them, some of whose names have hardly an existence save in some poetic or classical association—I say the very mention of the names of these rare exotics has a tendency to stir up the imagination to painting of all their gay decorations—all sorts and varieties of evergreens etc. etc. etc.—Directly in front of the Central door of the Capitol is a fish-pond—it is of oval shape, perhaps 2 rods wide by 3 rods long and some ten or twelve feet deep—paved in the bottom with hewn stone and built up around of the same material—then a few bushels of beautiful clean gravel thrown in—the water as clear as crystal and a beautiful cerulean blue—then caged in this miniature sea are great varieties of little fish—this pond is fenced round with an iron railing.²⁰ Near the top of the stone wall you can discover an orifice of perhaps thirty square inches, through which the water flows toward the Capitol, but you see it no more till you come round to the entrance of the basement story on the West, where, right in front of the very entrance it gushes out of a rich marble fountain, made for the purpose, into a large marble bowl which sits on a marble pedestal, a convenient hight for one to wash at. From this fountain, overflowing the bowl, it runs through a smooth, square gutter cut in rock for perhaps two rods, then falls with the continued roar of a miniature cataract into another fish-pond, just like the last excepting that it is square, instead of oval. Right in the Centre of this pool of water stands what is currantly denominated “the Naval Monument”.²¹ It is built chiefly of white marble, but, as I cannot command the technic's of the Sculptor's Art, I cannot pretend to give you a picture of this curiosity. I can, however, tell by whom erected and for what purpose, which I do by telling you what is engraved on its several squares. On the East side are written, in the marble, these words; (viz) “Erected to the memory of Capt. Richard Somers, Lieutenants

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James Caldwell, James Decatur, Henry Wadsworth, Joseph Israel and John Dorsey who fell in the differant attacks that were made on the city of Tripoli in the year of our Lord 1804 and in the 28th year of the Independence of the United States.” These words are on the South side; (viz) “The love of Glory inspired them, *Fame* has crowned their deeds, History records the event, the children of Columbia admire, and Commerce laments their fall.” On the North

20 See pl. 90 in Glenn Brown, *op. cit.*

21 Now in Annapolis. See pl. 89. *ibid.*

277 Side, these words; (viz) “As a small tribute of respect to their memory, and of admiration of their valor, so worthy of imitation, their brother Officers have erected this Monument.” So you see I am not the first Caldwell that ever entered the American Navy. Who this namesake was, by blood and origin, I know not,²² but the name he has already immortalized, and here it stands, imperishable as the marble. Well, so be it. I covet not the glory of any man, nor do I feel disposed to boast vainly; but I frankly declare this, that it is my determination to *deserve* promotion, if in my power; and to *obtain* it as speedily as possible. And if, as circumstances, of which I shall presently speak, seem to indicate, it is my lot to have been thrown into the Navy in just the nick of time, when we may have some active defense of our rights to make, be assured your name shall not be disgraced, nor your memory dishonoured, by the cowardice of one who holds both *sacred*. My temper is pacific, my voice is still for peace; but should circumstances in our national affairs bring about a war, I shall be responsible only for the *result*. If I die, it shall be at my post.—But hold! my pen seems given to digressions—we will have a word or two about the French War here-after. I will now return to my story.

22 James R. Caldwell, of Pennsylvania, first lieutenant of the *Siren*, killed Aug. 7, 1804, in one of the gunboat attacks on Tripoli. Goldsborough, *U. S. Naval Chronicle*, p. 227.

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The President's House is the next curiosity. It is built very much in external appearance like the Capitol excepting the Domes—and excepting that, although an immensely large house, it is small compared to the Capitol—it is a Capitol in miniature—and all that I can say of it is, that in the inside it seems to a stranger to be curiously arranged, so much so that he might with ease get lost in it. It is most richly and elegantly furnished, and comes up to my idea of a Royal Palace. On the outside it is commanding and magnificently grand. The yard and grounds around it are gratefully and gracefully adorned with trees, shrubbery, grass borders and walks. The Palace stands in the center of probably a ten acre lot and fronts North and south. On the east and west ends of the ten acre lot, or “President's square” as it is called, stand the four departments of State, Treasury, War and Navy.²³ (The Treasury building was burned down, you remember, but its place is here yet.) These buildings are very spacious—built of brick—rather antiquated in appearance. But I will tire myself and weary you if I continue dwelling on the minutiae of things. Suffice it for this part of my story, to say that the whole “square” is enclosed with an iron railing fence, or something so much like it that one might readily be deceived, and the whole concern together looks as if it might be the Manor of some such Nabob as Uncle Sam. The City of Washington is curiously laid out; but if you have ever seen a map of it, you will have a better idea of it than I can give you with my pen. However,

²³ The building of the State Department, and south of it that of the Treasury Department, stood at the east of the White House, approximately where the Treasury now stands; the building of the War Department, and south of it that of the Navy Department, at the west, about where now stands the State, War, and Navy Building. The allusion in the next sentence is to the fire of 1833.

²⁷⁸ this much I can say (viz) There is a set of streets they call Avenues, that all commence at the center of the Capitol and radiate to every point, $\frac{1}{2}$ point, and $\frac{1}{4}$ point of the Compass, another set that commence at the center of the President's House and radiate in the same way and then in addition to these the town is laid out in the old checquer-board

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style with streets crossing each other at right angles—So that from the Capitol or from the Prest's House you may go straight in whatever direction you please.

I have not yet taken an opportunity to examine the curiosities in the Patent Office or the office of the War Dep. where I am told there are some to be seen. Also in the Dep. of State—the Prest's H.—The curiosity one feels at first to hear the great men of the Nation make their speeches in Congress, I find soon wears off. Clay is very calm as yet and rather sulky. Webster says but little, but is expected to loom forth some of these days on the French claims previous to 1800. J. Q. Adams has not spent much breath yet this session; I suppose he has been condenseing for the purpose of making a great blow on the 31st in honour of the memory of the great and good Lafayette.²⁴ I expect that to be an occasion of interest and anticipate it with great pleasure. So much of the Prest's Message as refers to the French treaty is quite obnoxious to the blue-lights.²⁵ I believe it is refered to the Com. on Foreign Affairs, of which I think Clay is Chairman and he is expected to make his home thrust from that quarter. Some of the knowing ones seem to think and talk as if a war is inevitable, others say they cannot predict the issue, but there is only one path for them and that is to sustain the Executive in his proposed measures; better incur, say they, the expence, the difficulties and losses of a war than suffer the honour of the American nation to be tarnished (and by the way let me tell you, the Navy officers here, almost to a man, are hoping and praying for War). The event of the matter, I think however, will probably be that Congress will fight the battle themselves in the Capitol and save the French Nation and the American Navy the trouble.

²⁴ Lafayette died May 20, 1834. At the request of both houses of Congress, Adams delivered before them, on Dec. 31, 1834, an oration on Lafayette, printed in various editions. *Memoirs*, IX. 151–155, 196.

²⁵ Federalists, here no doubt meaning, opponents of Jackson.

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Well, (to strike off onto something new,) you do not expect that I have learned much yet about my duty as Lieut. or about the strength or condition of the American Navy, but being here, every day less or more, associating with Officers and men conversant with the service I could not avoid learning something. And I am perfectly astonished to learn how very *limited* is our navy, both in ships and men. The whole number of vessels in commission at present is only nineteen, as follows. 1 ship of the line!, 4 Frigates, 8 sloops of war, and 6 schooners!!! A mighty force indeed! Well, the whole force of men in the Navy proper, including Commissioned and Warrant Officers and seamen and boys and every kind of creature is only 6,072. That of the Marine Corps is only 1,283, making in all 7,355.26 When from this force you deduct

26 All these figures agree with, and were doubtless taken from, the annual report of the Secretary of the Navy communicated to Congress by the President on Dec. 2. *American State Papers, Naval Affairs*, IV. 589–590.

279 the ineffective part of the force you have but a small remnant left to contend with the thousands and thousands of the French Navy, for instance. We have but seven Navy yards, which are strewn along the coast as follows: Portsmouth, Boston, New York, Phila., Washington, Norfolk, and Pensacola. The different stations or squadrons into which our Navy is divided are as follows: 1 The Mediterranean, 2 The West Indian. 3 The Brazilian, 4 The Pacific and East Indian. Thus scattered over the world for the purpose of more advantageously protecting our widely extended commerce—and by the way our widely extended commerce would afford our nation the means of very suddenly increasing her navy, in the event of a war, for, in addition to the 13 naval vessels that are now in ordinary, (i.e.) laid up for repair, and the 13 that are in building, all of which would be speedily made ready for the sea, the Government could purchase Merchant Briggs and fit them out with guns, at comparatively trifling expense to almost any amount that any possible emergency could require, and that in a very short time.

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Col. Henderson I find to be a very plain and familiar man, entirely easy in his manners and very gentlemanly in his friendship,—has nothing of the cold and withering frost of ceremony about him. Being very favorably presented to him he told me that I might remain here until I was satisfied and then let him know whenever I was ready for orders, and he would send me to Norfolk, Phila., N. Y. or Boston, just as I would choose. Here then is the question for me. I have considered the matter myself and obtained all the information I could about the several stations, and think of preferring Boston.²⁷ Will probably leave here about the 5th or 8th of Jan. '35.

²⁷ The *Official Register* for 1835 and the *Naval Register* for January, 1836, show the writer stationed at Boston (Charlestown).

I will tell you in full the course I have been cutting out for myself in imagination; it is this: to spend the remainder of the present winter in Boston, perhaps till May next—then receive orders to join a vessel in the Pacific station for a 3 years cruise, during which I will circumnavigate the Globe, then in the spring of '38 return to the U. S., spend the summer on leave of absence among my friends in the West so as to rejoin again for a season the family circle and around the fireside and home of my youth to communicate to my dear parents and the family the result of these three years absence and experience in this strange world.—The summer being ended to rejoin the service and be sent out early in the fall on an other three years cruise to the Mediteranean station—then returning in the fall of 1841 to the U. S., resign my commission and retire to some sequestered spot and spend the remainder of my days in the sweet and peaceful enjoyment of the tranquilities of private life. But in the meantime during this 7 years of service it will be my fixed determination to give my leisure hours to Scientific research and especially to the thorough acquirement of the Profession of the Law—which, yes all of which, I will have abundance of leisure to do and almost equal advantages with those I would enjoy were I stationed all the while on land and in our own country.

I will submit my plan to Judge McLane²⁸ and get his advice as

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28 John McLean, of Ohio, associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States 1829–1861.

280 to what library I ought to possess myself of both in reference to the particular study of the Law and to general scientific research.

The almost numberless islands of the Pacific and Indian Oceans at which it will probably be my privilege to touch on this cruise, abound you know with things at once curious and useful—and a communication of the knowledge of which might at the same time be a positive and valuable acquisition to the scientific intelligence of this country, and perhaps a source of pecuniary profit to myself—for “of the making of books”, you know, “there is no end”.—I also intend proposing my plan to Col. Henderson and if I can do it in a proper way I think there will be no doubt but he will favour my views and wishes, and give me orders to those different stations. I find that there is a great deal to be gained by being in favour with the powers that be—there is a good deal of shuffling in the rank, a good deal of favouritism.

I know not what I ought to fill the remaining blank with that would be of most interest to you. I know of no political news nor of anything specially interesting from Congress. You see the journals as reported in the several papers of the city. Perhaps it will be amusing to describe to you what will be my uniform as Lieut. of Marines. Cap—bell-crown, black leather varnished, mounted with brass scales, brass eagle, black cockade and yellow pompons. Coat—grass green cloth, double breasted, two rows gilt, convex, with eagle, anchor and stars, raised border buttons, ten in each row; standing collar, edged with buff, two loops and buttons on collar of gold lace,—skirt to extend nearly to the bend of the knee, with two large buttons at the waist and gold embroidered shell and flame at the bottom of the skirt; breast to be lined with buff and other small items of ornament so as to make it look splendid. Epaulettes one on each shoulder, of bright gold bullion 2½ inches long and somewhat less than ½ inch diameter, plain gold lace strap, solid crescent, the letters M. C. to be embroidered or of silver within the crescent. Trousers from 15 Oct till 30 April, light grey cloth with buff cloth stripe down the outer seam 1½ inches wide and welted

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on the edges. From 1st May till 14 Oct., white linen drilling, plain and spotless. Sword—brass scabbard sword with a mamaluke hilt of white ivory, extreme length of sword 3 feet 1½ inch, curve of blade ½ inch only, so as to be used for cut or thrust, the hilt (included in extreme length) 4¾ inches, width of scabbard 1# inches, width of blade 1 inch. Sword-knot, crimson and gold with bullion tassel. Sword belt of white leather, 2½ inches wide etc. Sash crimson silk net, with bullion fringe ends, to go twice round the waist and tie on the left hip; the pendant part to be one foot from the tie. Stock black bombasin, white gloves, etc. Boots worn under pants. This is for dress or parade uniform; then we have a frock coat, grass green cloth, single breasted, with ten large marine buttons down the front, two small marine buttons at cuffs, plain stand up collar, lining buff. And then [a] calash, “sort a” fatigue cap. The general opinion of the uniform is that it could not well be much more splendid than it is. All this is quite right—the Nation is opulent—the service is honorable and the uniform ought to be of the first respectability.

About my business with Mrs. Long, I would like to hear, if you have learned anything new, or how she likes the leaving of the notes 281 in the Bk. I think of course that I must insist on the payment of the face of the notes. As soon as any money is paid in, I wish to invest it in some profitable stock, if I could be advised. You cannot probably receive this letter before I leave this city, but please write me immediately to Boston on the receipt of this letter. Let me know all about your winter arrangements and how Jas. is contented at home when John and I are both away,—how he is like [to] progress with brother McDill. I hope he will think of nothing short of a thorough liberal education; as I know it is your wish to give it to him and as I know it will be of more value to him than many times the amount of treasure it will cost to procure it. My love to him always. Give my best love to Mother²⁹ and tell her that so soon as I can equip myself cap apie, and can meet with a gifted and liberal artist, I will have a full length portrait of the soldier drawn and send it home for a family piece, which will grace her parlour better than the face I gave her. I hear nothing of Robt Welsh,³⁰ but suppose of course he has sailed long ago for the West Indies as his letters led us to expect before I left home. We had a fall of snow 3 or 4 days ago which had

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not all gone off last night, when it commenced snowing again and has continued without interruption to-day until now 5 o'clock P. M. The weather has not been cold; but I expect after this that I shall have a cold ride to Boston and have it cold when I get there. But wrap in furs will be the remedy.

29 The writer's stepmother.

30 Robert Patterson Welch, son of Mrs. Caldwell by her second husband, Rev. James Welch (d. 1825), entered the naval service as a midshipman Apr. 1, 1828. The *Naval Register* of January, 1835, lists him as on the sloop *St. Louis*, then on the West Indian station.

Your affectionate son, R. C. Caldwell.